



Letter to the Editor

Important treatment change for *Neisseria gonorrhoea*

Dear Sir,

Readers will be interested in the recent changes to British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) recommendations for the treatment of gonorrhoea.

Neisseria gonorrhoea has had a longstanding propensity to become resistant to commonly prescribed antibiotics. Initially the organism was fully sensitive to penicillin however after developing resistance to this ciprofloxacin was used as first-line treatment. More recently, with further accumulating antibiotic resistance, a single oral dose of 3rd generation cephalosporin cefixime has been used as treatment. In 2009 surveillance data from England and Wales showed extensive resistance to penicillin (22% cases), tetracyclines (68% cases), and ciprofloxacin (35% cases).^{1,2} Since this time, GRASP monitoring group have been aware of an increasing minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC > 0.25 mg/L) to cefixime. Three cases of reported treatment failure with cefixime in 2011^{3,4} prompted the updating of national guidelines recommending the use of ceftriaxone 500 mg IM stat.⁵

It is for forensic medical officers who give prophylactic antibiotic treatment to sexual assault victims to be aware of this change in guidance. In view of this, the use of ceftriaxone 500 mg stat along with azithromycin 1 g stat should be considered as prophylaxis for gonorrhoea and chlamydia respectively.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

References

1. Gonococcal Resistance to Antimicrobials Surveillance Programme in England, and Wales (GRASP): report of 2009 data *Health Protection Report* Vol. 4(34), <http://www.hpa.org.uk> [accessed 23.08.11].
2. Martin IMC, Hoffman S, Ison CA. European Surveillance of Sexually Transmitted Infections (ESSTI): the first combined antimicrobial susceptibility data for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in Western Europe. *J Antimicrob Chemother* 2006;**58**:587–93.
3. Ison CA, Hussey J, Sankar KN, Evans J, Alexander S. Gonorrhoea treatment failures to cefixime and azithromycin in England, 2010. *Euro Surveill* 2011;**16**(14): p11, <http://www.eurosurveillance.org> [accessed 23.08.11].
4. Forsyth S, Penney P, Rooney G. Cefixime-resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in the UK: a time to reflect on practice and recommendations. *Int J STD AIDS* 2011; **22**(5):296–7.
5. Bignell C, Fitzgerald M. *UK National Guideline for the Management of Gonorrhoea in adults*. Clinical Effectiveness Group, British Association of Sexual Health and HIV, <http://www.bashh.org/guidelines>; 2011 [accessed 23.08.11].

E.J. McCarty, MRCP, DipGUM, Consultant Physician
Genitourinary & HIV Medicine*, W.W. Dinsmore, MD,
FRCP, Consultant Physician Genitourinary Medicine
Royal Victoria Hospital, Department of Genitourinary Medicine,
Grosvenor Road, Belfast, United Kingdom

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ej_mccarty@hotmail.com (E.J. McCarty)

24 August 2011

Available online 11 July 2012